



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19th District News

Spring 2002



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Dear Friends:

We're writing to review the 2002 Legislative Session. **As always, we appreciate — we encourage! — your interest in our work to represent families and businesses of coastal and Southwest Washington.**

No matter what you think about government, we can assure you that people in the House of Representatives and the Senate are the same as people in any other place of business (or home or school or whatever). The victims of the awful September terrorism — and, maybe even more so, the families of the victims — have never been far from our hearts.

This year's legislative meeting, just like others before and ones to come, was called together to answer the most pressing needs of our state. **In this edition of 19th District News, you will find, primarily, details about two huge issues that mean something — that mean a lot! — for every Washington citizen:**

- **Our agreement on a new operating budget.**
- **Our agreement on a new blueprint for the transportation system.**

Additional matters are also addressed in these pages. Economic development in rural and small-town Washington, for one thing, took its rightful place atop our priorities. Frankly, though, anyone searching for a theme to this year's Legislature need look no further than "Making government more responsive to real people's real needs."

Again, we ask that you stay in touch. Your opinions count — much more than you might think!

Best wishes,

Brian Hatfield
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Mark Doumit
State Representative
19th Legislative District

◆ New budget: Meeting the most pressing needs of every Washingtonian

Going into the legislative session in January, we knew we'd have our hands full answering challenging budget questions. The state economy had already been sliding for half a year – what with the energy crisis, the drought, and a general downturn in key industries.

Last September's cowardly terrorism aggravated the recession in our state even more than most other parts of our country. Coastal and Southwest Washington faced — and still face — unemployment rates as alarming as anywhere else in the state. (More people — a larger percentage of the work force — are out of a job in Washington as a whole than just about anywhere else, too.) Further, since the current biennial budget was first approved last summer, more students are enrolled in our schools, more inmates are incarcerated in our prisons — and health-care costs have knocked an even bigger hole in our roof.

In mid-January, the revenue coming in was projected to be about \$1.2 billion less than what it would take to cover essential programs and services — including the state-spending ordered in recent citizen-initiatives. Then, things got worse.

In mid-February, with not much more than a few weeks left in session, the revenue-deficit went up to more than \$1.5 billion. We already knew we'd have to make significant cuts when we got to Olympia in January. Now, those cuts became gashes.

◆ On time — with no tax hikes

But be all that as it may, we went to the Legislature to do a job — not to find excuses and scapegoats for awful troubles hitting many Washington families in a terribly personal way.

To fill the budget crevasse, three major strategies were developed by Democrats in the legislative majority — and, yes, agreed-to by more than a few Republicans in the opposition. The revised Washington state operating budget:

- Imposes more than \$680 million in spending-cuts.
- Lays off more than 940 state workers.
- Taps available tobacco-settlement money, as well as emergency-reserve funds.

No, it's not a happy budget. But make no mistake: It bares noting that we reached this budget-agreement before the 60-day deadline ordered by our Washington Constitution. And we rejected any general-tax increase to pay for programs and services.

We were successful in winning support for a new, more reliable method of funding the Community Economic Revitalization Board. This important program



Economic development for our working families and working businesses is more important this year than ever before.

supports local-infrastructure development for Washington towns and cities that have been the most hard-hit by economic problems not of their own making. The idea is to put infrastructural components in place to create and keep good-paying jobs that support our families.

◆ Transportation: Tackling a highway roadblock with efficiency and accountability

On the last day of this year's legislative session, we approved a 10-year, \$7.7 billion statewide transportation proposition that highlights highway safety and efficiency. We also emphasize freight-mobility and rail service to make sure we get our state's goods and products — and, certainly, our region's goods and products! — to market on time. **This transportation-project and funding plan will go before Washington voters in this November's election.**

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Some of our coastal and Southwest Washington region's most significant, potential transportation projects include:

- A realignment for the "Svensen's curve" stretch of State Route 4 between Skamokawa and Grays River.
- A new bridge at Ostrander Road over the Cowlitz River for access for the Lexington neighborhood north of Kelso.
- An interchange for Interstate 5 and State Route 502.
- An item in the new *capital budget* — which doesn't need to go to a public vote — has money to help pay for dredging the Columbia River between Vancouver and the Pacific Ocean. (We'll talk more about the capital budget a little later.)

The hard part, of course, is deciding how best to pay for these and other transportation-system improvements most everyone agrees we need.

Terms of the proposal would set a nine-cent increase in the state gas tax — five cents starting next January and four cents the following year — to provide most

◆ A local tax repealed

There are a couple other very important transportation-related issues to note.

We agreed, for one thing, to repeal the local portion of the motor-vehicle excise tax.

Quickly signed into law by the governor, another measure we passed very early this session represents a large, bipartisan step toward real reform — in how we maintain and improve our transportation infrastructure. This new policy demands genuine efficiency and genuine accountability.

We adopted — specifically — key recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation. Comprised of private citizens and businesspeople, the Blue Ribbon Commission invested two years searching for ways to move our roads, highways, bridges, ferries, and other parts of the infrastructure into the 21st century.

This efficiency and accountability legislation authorizes more contracting-out for the design and construction of transportation projects. What we're stressing with this provision in the new law is a renewed emphasis on developing and strengthening partnerships with our private sector.

Diverse organizations backed this bill in committee testimony. Organizations ranging from the Associated General Contractors of Washington, to the Association of Washington Business, to the Washington State Association of Counties, to the Association of Washington Cities, to the Washington State Transit Association — they all weighed in with support.

◆ Capital budget:

Economic development is a big part of the construction plan

Who would argue with the idea that it's more important now than ever to pursue high-quality economic development?

We need to do whatever it takes to stimulate the growth and retention of good places to work. Our state's revised capital budget encourages a business climate that grows good-paying jobs. The legislation includes statewide funding for local jails, salmon-recovery, and water-pollution control.



We approved a transportation plan stressing efficiency and accountability to get our state moving – and keep it moving.

of the revenue. The legislation calls for a 30-percent increase in the gross vehicle-weight fee – half next January and half the following year. Also, the plan has a one-percent sales-tax increase on vehicles – starting next January.

A portion of the revenue would go to help pay for Southwest Washington projects – such as the street, drainage, and sidewalk work recently completed in Cosmopolis and Raymond. Economic-development work on additional components of our regional infrastructure would also be assisted.

Specific projects in our region highlight:

- Department of Social and Health Services – Naselle Youth Camp (roof repairs at cottages and school/gymnasium).
- Grays Harbor College (roof and facility repairs, electrical panels).
- Lower Columbia College (roof repairs and removal of portables).
- Department of Fish and Wildlife – Johns River (replace heating and windows).
- Washington State Historical Society – Lewis & Clark station camp (park and infrastructure development).
- State Parks and Recreation Commission:
 - Fort Canby North Head – duplex and carriage house.
 - Twin Harbors – water-system improvements, and Twin Harbors West – campground comfort station replacements.
 - Fort Columbia – exterior improvements to hostel.
 - Ocean-beach access – water-line purveyors.

◆ Shorelines:

Agriculture will be shielded from new rules and regulations

It's just common sense.

We rounded up support for a new state law specifically exempting farms from any new shoreline rules.

This is truly a common-sense bill. Farming is a huge part of the economy where we live – and we've already taken hits to our forest and fishing industries. We can't afford to have a state agency further suffocating our working families and our working businesses.

We worked very closely with the Washington State Farm Bureau to get this bill passed this session.

You may recall that the state Shorelines Hearings Board last August stopped new shoreline rules that the state Department of Ecology had adopted in November 2000.

Fifty-four county and city governments, business organizations, and private citizens had joined a lawsuit to thwart the department's proposal. The hearings board ruled that the department went beyond its authority in the state Shoreline Management Act when the department released its new rules for implementing the federal Endangered Species Act.

We also passed legislation this session to raise the threshold from \$2,500 to \$5,000 at which point a



This year's legislative session included a great deal of discussion on the floor of the House of Representatives.

project is considered a substantial development. What this means is that you won't have to follow inexorable bureaucratic rules for every little project you want to do. Plus, these rules — which hadn't changed in many years — will be adjusted regularly for inflation.

◆ Landowners:

New policy reflects key role for Washington's family forests

Is there anyone who doesn't recognize the vital role small family-forest landowners play in our regional and state economy?

We captured passage of a new rule aimed at helping these landowners remove trees from easement buffers to maintain the overall health of their land.

And this isn't just a rural-Washington issue, either. (But if it were, that would be enough for us.) Family

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forests contribute to the economic and environmental well-being of rural *and* urban Washington.

Why shouldn't we give these families and these businesspeople more help?

Every time Boeing sneezes, everyone in Seattle rushes around to find them a hankie. And that's fine — Boeing (even in bad times) employs thousands and thousands of workers. It's not the crime of the century that our state provides help for the airplane folks when they need it. All we're saying in this legislation is that small family-forest landowners are Washingtonians, too!

And another thing: Changes that help these families will help our whole state by maintaining valuable habitat for fish and wildlife.

◆ Licensing: Commercial fishers should be able to directly sell catches

Let's talk a little bit today about a bill that people might not be talking about a hundred years from now. As far as we're concerned, it's awfully important *this year*!

Terms of the new policy direct that the Department of Fish & Wildlife will offer what's called the direct retail endorsement. This will provide a single license allowing a person — someone who already has a commercial-fishing license — to clean, dress, and sell his or her salmon or crab directly to the retail market.

The direct retail license may not be transferred or assigned with the existing license.

Only one direct retail endorsement is necessary — even for fishers owning multiple commercial-fishing licenses. Our state should do whatever it takes to provide commercial fishers the opportunity to sell their catch directly to consumers.

This legislation simply gives them a reasonable chance to make the most money from their catch.

Further, tourists will spread the word that fresh seafood is available directly from fishers in our communities.

◆ Shellfish: Here's a boost for harvesters of clams, oysters and geoducks

And speaking of people who depend on the water for their livelihood:

Shellfish-growers who make their living along the coast and elsewhere in the Evergreen State could use some assurance that the State of Washington — exploiting a long-ago law — isn't going to come along and take their land away. Another bill we guided through the process this session is intended to provide that assurance.

The new law gives clam- and oyster-growers the definitive legal right to use their land to conduct their business. It's very important to their industry that they have this assurance.

In 1895, you see, the Washington State Legislature passed the Bush and Callow acts allowing the sale of aquatic lands to be used only for oyster-planting. State law at the time specified that if the aquatic lands were used for any purpose other than oyster-harvesting, the ownership would revert back to the state.

In 1919, the Legislature passed the Clam Act. This law allowed owners of aquatic lands purchased under terms of the Bush and Callow acts to cultivate clams and other edible shellfish without having to worry about the land reverting back to the state — even though the land was being used for something other than growing oysters.

In 1935, the Bush and Callow acts were repealed. But the Legislature at that time did include a clause allowing individuals who had purchased aquatic lands under the acts to maintain full ownership of the land —



Southwest Washington communities deserve fair treatment in the way the state's policies are administered.

Representative Brian Hatfield • Representative Mark Doumit

subject to reversion back to the state if the lands were used for improper purposes.

In 1949, the Clam Act was repealed when our state's Fisheries Code underwent a massive rewrite. Since the repeal of the Clam Act didn't include a clause such as the one noted above, the permission to cultivate shellfish other than oysters on Bush and Callow lands was repealed right along with the act.

Today, aquatic lands sold under the Bush and Callow acts are still being actively used for cultivation of oysters. However, many acres of these aquatic lands are also being used for cultivation of clam, geoduck, and other shellfish.

The problem is that about 11 years ago, the then state attorney general said that shellfish operations raising shellfish other than oysters prior to the repeal of the Clam Act had a right to continue activities consistent with the Clam Act. The attorney general, though, also suggested that shellfish operators who have been

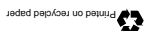
raising clams and other shellfish since the Clam Act was repealed 53 years ago might have to turn their lands back over to the state.

Our bill resolves this uncertainty. The measure says, in plain terms, that shellfish-harvesters can, in fact, keep harvesting shellfish other than oysters.



During a break in floor action in the House, we can catch up on our constituent-correspondence.

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